

REMARKS

Applicants request favorable reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections set forth in the Office Action in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

Claims 1-8 remain pending in the application, with claim 1 being the only independent claim. The claims have not been amended herein.

Claims 1-4 and 6-8 are rejected in the Office Action under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Block et al. (U.S. Patent Application Pub. No. 2003/0055689) in view of Schiff et al. (U.S. Patent Application Pub. No. 2003/0004760). Claim 5 is rejected as being unpatentable over Block et al. and Schiff et al., and further in view of Walker et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,897,620).

Applicants respectfully traverse the rejections, and submit that the claimed invention is patentably distinguishable from the references cited in the Office Action for at least the following reasons.

The Office Action cites Block et al. as disclosing a method comprising some of the features of the claimed invention. The Office Action acknowledges, however, that Block et al. does not disclose or suggest receiving a travel booking for a travel plan from a travel counselor at a travel counselor office by a first travel channel, as is recited in independent claim 1.

In order to cure this deficiency in Block et al., the Office Action cites Schiff et al. as disclosing a system wherein a travel counselor is able to book travel for a customer using web browser programs. The Office Action concludes that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to receive a travel booking for a travel plan from a travel counselor at a travel counselor office by a first one of the travel channels with the motivation being to allow the intervention of a third party to facilitate booking of travel.

Applicants respectfully submit, however, that the rejection in view of the combination of Block et al. and Schiff et al. looks merely to one feature of the claims in isolation, and does not consider the full teachings of the references, nor the complete combination of the features recited claim 1. When both the references and claim are considered, Applicants submit that the invention includes a combination of features that would not have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art in view of the cited references.

Allowing a travel counselor to book travel for a customer, as the Schiff et al. reference is generally cited in Office Action as disclosing, is not in and of itself novel. The presently claimed invention, however, combines a travel counselor booking feature within a consumer travel integration method to result in a synergy not previously achieved in the art. The consumer travel integration method includes a plurality of travel channels that both allow for receiving and storing a travel booking, as well as allow for receiving a travel change and subsequently modifying the travel booking. It is within this context of a plurality of travel channels for effectuating travel booking that the claimed invention includes the feature of receiving a travel booking from a travel counselor. As a result, the claimed method allows for, inter alia, receipt of a travel booking from a travel counselor through one of a plurality of travel channels, and further servicing of the travel booking to produce a modified booking using one of the same plurality of travel channels.

The Office Action acknowledges that Block et al. does not disclose or suggest receiving a travel booking for a travel plan from a travel counselor at a travel counselor office by a first of plurality of travel channels. Applicants submit that Block et al. does not merely lack a disclosure of a travel counselor, but further teaches away from the idea of including a travel counselor in the methods disclosed therein. Block et al. discloses that an object of the invention disclosed therein

is to enable “travelers to rapidly and interactively communicate via the Internet or other networks with desired websites or other devices for making all necessary travel arrangements for a desired trip.” Paragraph 0004 (emphasis added). Further, Block et al. also includes an extensive discussion involving the use of the traveler’s personal information in conjunction with aspects of the system, including security features of the system. See, pp. 14-23.

It is against these disclosures of Block et al. that the obviousness of incorporating a travel counselor into the methods of Block et al. must be evaluated. See MPEP § 2141.03 (noting that art must be considered in its entirety, including disclosures that teach away from the claims). The Office Action asserts that a motivation for the modification of Block et al. would be to allow for the intervention of a third party to facilitate booking of travel in the reference’s methods. This, however, contradicts the idea of Block et al. of providing methods in which a traveler alone can make all necessary travel arrangements. By being able to make all the necessary travel arrangements for a trip, the traveler in the methods disclosed by Block et al. has no need for interaction with a travel agent or counselor.

Further, the proposed modification set forth in the Office Action of allowing a third party to intervene in the booking of travel would necessarily undermine at least some of the security of Block et al.’s methods. For example, the modification to include travel counselors in the method of Block et al. would require that personal information for the traveler be shared with the travel counselors, undermining the security objective that is disclosed in conjunction with the methods of Block et al.

As such, Applicants submit that the motivation set forth in the Office Action for modifying Block et al. with the disclosure of Schiff et al., in fact, contradicts multiple teachings of the Block et al. reference itself. This is improper. C.f. MPEP § 2143.01 (noting that a

proposed modification cannot render a reference unsatisfactory for its intended purpose, nor change the principle operation of a reference). Moreover, given that the motivation set forth in the Office Action is contrary to the teachings of the primary reference of Block et al., Applicants respectfully submit that the rejection is not based solely on knowledge which was available to one ordinary skill in the art at the time of the claimed invention, but rather would have been obvious only in view of the hindsight afforded by Applicants' disclosure.

For at least the foregoing reasons, Applicants submit that the invention recited in independent claim 1 includes a combination of features that would not have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art in view, even in view of the disclosures of Block et al. and Schiff et al.

Applicants further submit that the citation to Walker et al. fails to cure the deficiencies of the other cited references. Walker et al. is cited as suggesting certain features of a dependent claim. This reference, however, fails to suggest the features of independent claim 1 that are not suggested by Block et al. and Schiff et al., as described above.

Thus, Applicants submit that independent claims 1 is allowable over the references cited in the Office Action, whether the references are taken individually or collectively.

The dependent claims also should be deemed allowable, in their own right, for defining other patentable features of the invention in addition to those recited in independent claim 1. Further individual consideration of the dependent claims is requested.

Applicants respectfully submit that all outstanding matters in this application have been addressed and that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and early passage to issue of the above application is respectfully sought.

Any fee required in connection with this paper should be charged to Deposit Account No. 06-1205.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in the Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to the below listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

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